

2 Existing Plans and Policy Review

This chapter establishes the Metro Connector planning effort within the context of other plans and policies completed or ongoing in Rhode Island. Through this work, RIPTA can better understand the state and local policies in place today, and adopted plans that establish broader goals with which the Metro Connector should align or, if inconsistencies are present, that RIPTA should be aware of at the outset of this effort.

The work focused on plans where transportation, sustainability, and/or land use were addressed. The most relevant findings from each plan regarding the Metro Connector Study are summarized over the following pages.

The list of plans reviewed is in Table 2-1 below.

Table 2-1 Reviewed Plans and Reports

Plan	Agency/City	Publication Date	Link (if available)
Statewide Transportation Plans			
Transit Forward RI 2040 (Statewide Transit Master Plan)	RIPTA, Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), and Rhode Island Department of Administration (RIDOA) / Division of Statewide Planning (DSP)	2020	Link
Moving Forward RI 2040 (Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan and Metropolitan Transportation Plan)	RIDOA / DSP	2020	Link
State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)	Rhode Island State Planning Council	2024	Link
Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan	RIDOA / DSP	2020	Link
Congestion Management Plan	RIDOA / DSP	2020	Link
Climate and Sustainability Plans			
2021 Act on Climate and 2022 Climate Update	Rhode Island Office of the Governor and the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)	2021/2022	2021 Act on Climate: Link 2022 Climate Update: Link
Clean Transportation and Mobility Innovation Report	Rhode Island Mobility Innovation Working Group	2021	Link
Climate Justice Plan	City of Providence / Office of Sustainability	2019	Link
2021-2024 Rhode Island Asthma Strategic Plan	Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)	2021	Link
Safety and Complete Streets Policies/Plans			
Statewide Complete Streets Policy	Rhode Island General Assembly	2012	Link
RI Complete Streets Plan	RIDOT (2025 update under development by RI DSP)	2015	Link
Walk Bike PCF	RIDOT, RI DOA/DSP, City of Pawtucket, City of Central Falls	2020	Link
Providence Great Streets Plan	City of Providence/Department of Planning & Development	2020 & 2024	Link
North Main Street Corridor Study	City of Providence/Department of Planning & Development	2022	Link
North Main Street Roadway Safety Audit	RIDOT	2024	Not available
Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Plans (Under development)	RIPTA and local municipalities (under development)	Expected 2024 and later	Not available

Plan	Agency/City	Publication Date	Link (if available)
Land Use & Housing Plans and Policies			
Statewide Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program Legislation (2023 H6084B)	RI General Assembly	2023	Link
Housing Facts RI	HousingWorks RI	2023	Link
Pawtucket & Central Falls Station District Vision Plan	City of Pawtucket / City of Central Falls	2016	Link
Providence Comprehensive Plan (2024 Update)	City of Providence / Department of Planning & Development / Providence	Expected 2024 (under development)	Not available
Warwick Master Plan	City of Warwick / Planning Board	2013	Link
Warwick Station Development District Master Plan	City of Warwick / Planning Department	2012	Link
City of Pawtucket Comprehensive Plan	City of Pawtucket / Planning Commission	2017	Link
Central Falls 2050	City of Central Falls / Planning and Economic Development	Expected 2024 (under development)	Not available
City of Cranston Comprehensive Plan	City of Cranston	2010	Link
Town of Cumberland Comprehensive Plan	Town of Cumberland	Comprehensive Plan: 2017	Comprehensive Plan: Link
Valley Falls and Lonsdale Economic Revitalization & Social Equity Plan		Valley Falls and Lonsdale Plan: 2023	VFL Plan: Link
Ocean State Accelerates (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy)	Rhode Island Commerce	2023	Link
RI 2030: Charting a Course for the Future of the Ocean State	Office of Governor Daniel J. McKee	2022	Link

Statewide Transportation Plans

Transit Forward RI 2040 / Statewide Transit Master Plan (2020)

The Statewide Transit Master Plan (TMP) lays out a long-range vision for RIPTA services for 2040. The plan is guided by the following goals:

- Enhance: Make transit more attractive and compelling
- Connect: Connect people to activities
- Thrive: Grow the economy and improve quality of life
- Sustain: Ensure financial and environmental sustainability

The plan was based on detailed modeling of ridership demand across the State and informed by extensive public outreach through community meetings, workshops, and surveys. Its recommendations are organized into 5 initiatives, three of which are particularly relevant to the Study. **One of the five TMP initiatives specifically calls for the introduction of HCT between Central Falls and CCRI Warwick, and between Providence and RI TF Green International Airport (the Airport).**

Table 2-2 Transit Forward RI Initiatives

Initiative	Relevance to Metro Connector Study
Improve the frequency, span, and speed of existing services.	Existing RIPTA services with high ridership and serving areas with high transit propensity were identified for further investment. This included a recommendation to make service in the two high-capacity transit (HCT) corridors faster, more frequent and more reliable.
Develop HCT such as light rail, bus rapid transit, or rapid bus	The TMP's most relevant recommendation was the identification of two major corridors for HCT, either Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail Transit (LRT), based on high levels of ridership demand, shown in Figure 2-2. One corridor would potentially operate between CCRI Warwick and Central Falls; the second would potentially operate between CCRI Warwick and Providence via TF Green Airport. Both routes would operate every 10 minutes or better for at least 18 hours per day. The plan identified these projects as near-term priorities.
Make it easier to get to and from transit stops	This initiative would improve access to transit services through new pedestrian and bicycle investments along several major corridors in Metro Providence, including the two corridors identified for HCT.

Proposed Light Rail and BRT Routes

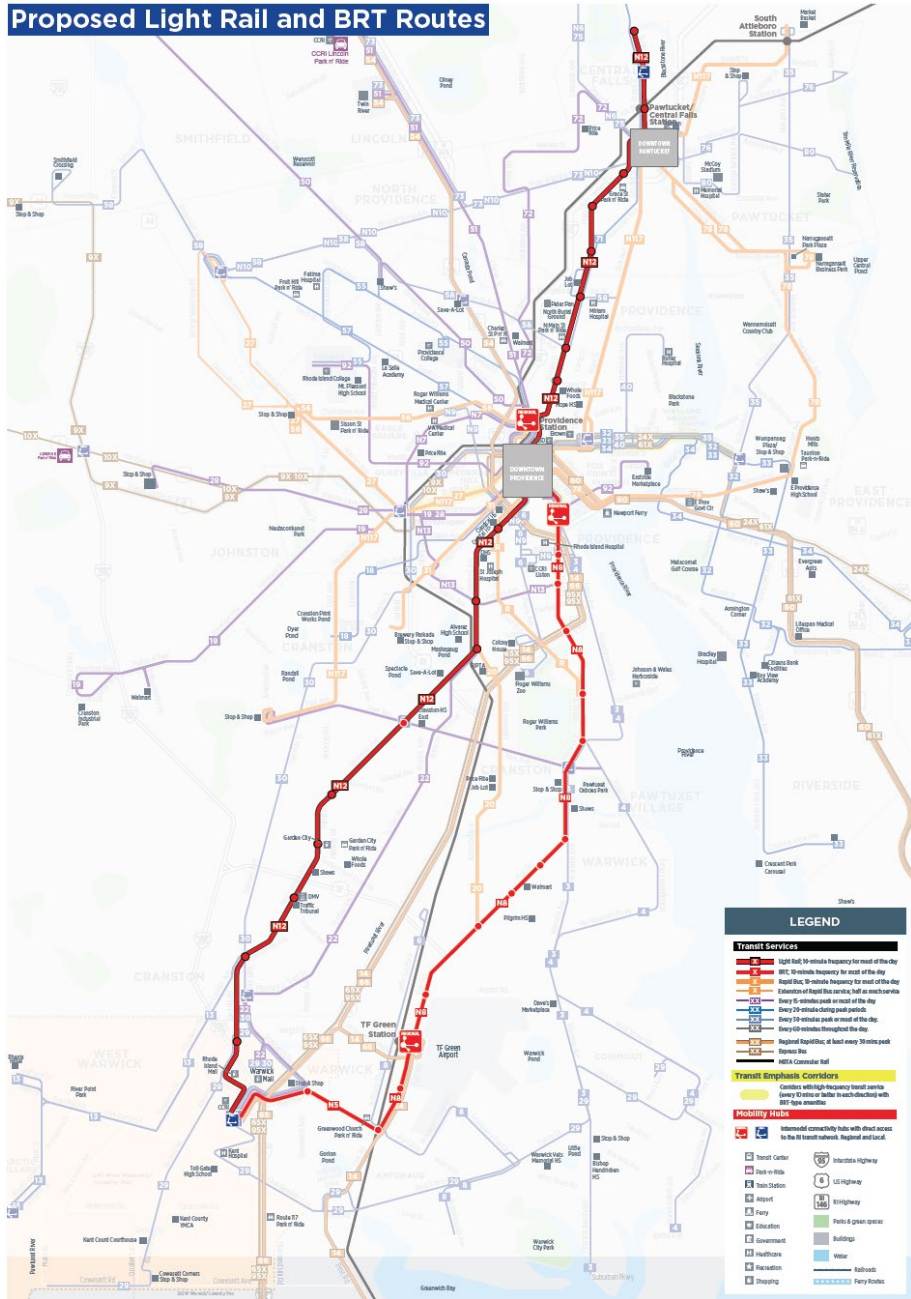


Figure 2-1 High-Capacity Transit

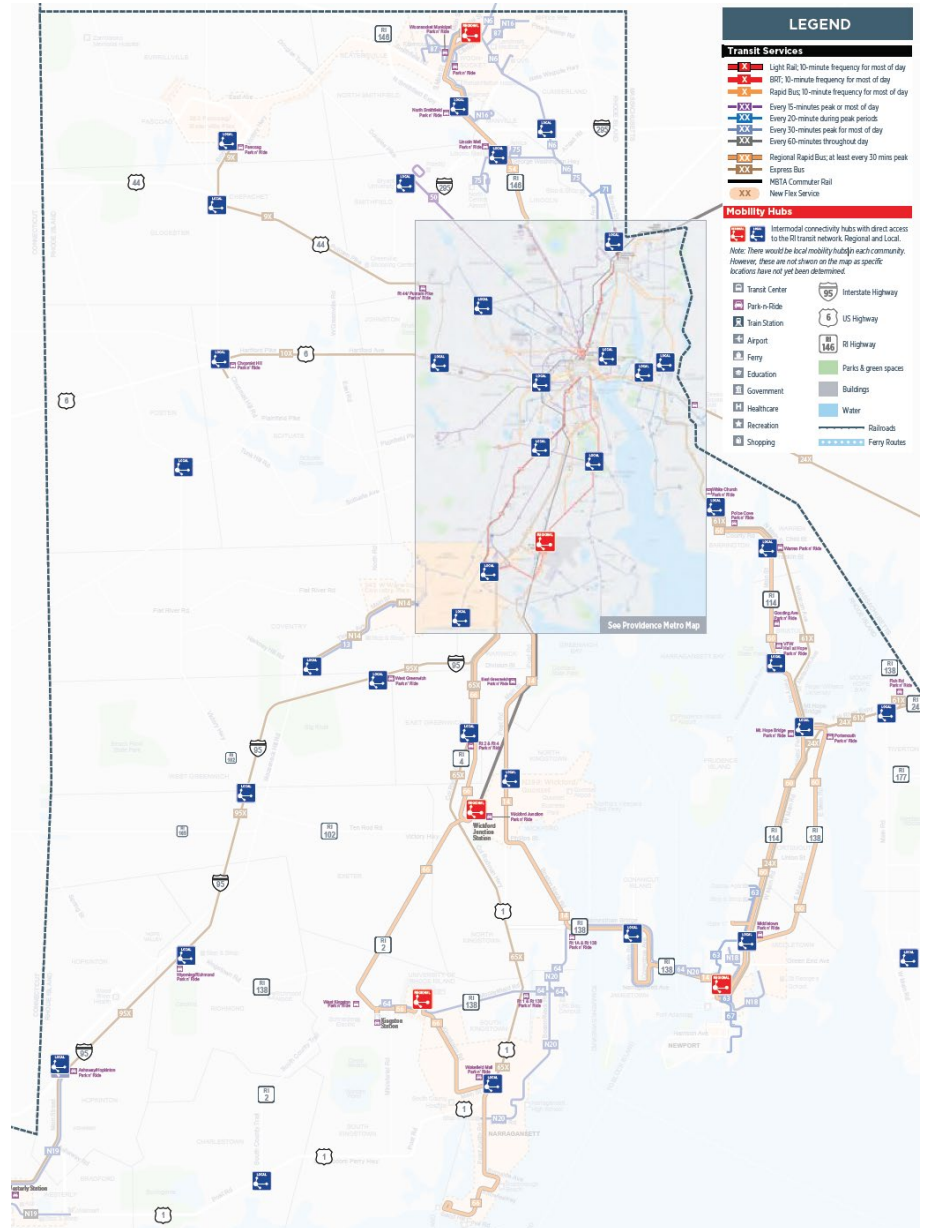


Figure 2-2 Mobility Hubs

Moving Forward RI 2040 / Rhode Island Long Range Transportation Plan and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020)

Moving Forward RI 2040 is the State’s most recent Long Range Transportation Plan update. It represents a fiscally constrained approach to bringing together detailed modal plans, including the TMP, Bike Mobility Plan, and Congestion Management Plan. The plan describes Rhode Island’s most critical transportation needs and challenges over a twenty-year horizon through 2040 and establishes performance measures and targets.

The plan projects trends through 2040. Higher densities and increasing congestion are expected, with the greatest increases around Providence and in Warwick near RI TF Green International Airport. Population is expected to grow by almost 2% in Providence County through 2040, and by 0.5% in Kent County (although employment is expected to shrink in both counties, by -0.4% and -1.2%, respectively). Overall, a 7% increase in trip-making is expected statewide, with some of the largest increases along the study corridors. These trends underscore the need for HCT in the study corridors.

The plan identified five statewide goals, all of which would be directly advanced by the development of HCT. To advance these goals, **the plan identified key projects including BRT/LRT improvements between Central Falls and CCRI Warwick and Providence and the Airport. It further established performance measures including those to increase transit ridership; build more dedicated bus lanes to improve transit reliability; encourage mode shift and reduce VMT; and increase the number of people living and working along frequent transit corridors.**

Table 2-3 State Transportation Goals and Metro Connector Study

State Transportation Goals	Relevance to Metro Connector Study
<p>Connect People and Places across all modes for efficient and effective travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Measures: Increase transit ridership, on-time performance, and reliability of person-miles traveled 	<p>Identify priority networks for all modes; focus on intermodal connections; and provide incentives for use of public transportation</p>
<p>Maintain Infrastructure to create a reliable network and adequate travel choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Measures: Increase the number of dedicated bus lane miles and reduce safety incident rate 	<p>Prioritize multi-modal solutions that have a high return on investment; improve safety and mobility for all travelers; and bundle ADA, safety and multi-modal facility improvements.</p>
<p>Strengthen Communities to enhance the quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Measure: transportation equity benefits 	<p>Prioritize improvements that encourage mode shift; support Complete Streets ordinances; support TOD ordinances; promote regional TOD funds that leverage public resources; ensure transportation investments benefit disadvantaged communities and minimize displacement; ensure public transit is faster, more frequent, affordable and gets people where they want to go; and better connect land use.</p>
<p>Promote Environmental Sustainability by prioritizing non-single occupancy vehicles (SOVs))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Measure: Reduce VMT 	<p>Promote alternatives to SOV trips, particularly transit; implement smart growth policies; develop measures to counter transportation GHG emission sources; and support active transportation and transit.</p>
<p>Support Economic Growth through transportation connectivity and choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Measures: Increase total population and employment within ½ mile of frequent transit 	<p>Provide opportunities for TOD; maximize efficient multimodal connections at TF Green Airport; invest in regional mobility enhancements; promote non-SOV transportation; and improve safety.</p>

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) 2022-2031 (most recently amended in 2024)

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a federally required document outlining the State's plans to use US Department of Transportation Funds. The most recent update for FFY 2022-2031 lists funded surface transportation projects. Programmed funding relevant to the proposed HCT corridors include support for:

- TMP implementation (e.g. mobility hubs, frequent transit networks, crosstown service, rapid bus, regional rapid bus, and other transit improvements)
- Study and development for a new Providence Intermodal Center
- Construction of a bus hub at the CCRI Warwick Campus

Funded roadway projects were identified through a review of the most recent RhodeWorks Plan (2022). RIDOT manages the RhodeWorks program to provide State match to federal projects, particularly repairing, rehabilitating, and preserving bridges and other major infrastructure. Programmed roadway improvements through 2032 include additional projects within the Metro Connector Study area that provide opportunities to support transit.

Active Transportation Program

- Traffic Safety Program (Statewide)
- US-1, North Main St (Doyle Ave to Pawtucket T/L)
- Woonasquatucket Greenway Enhancements (Providence)
- North Main St. at Doyle Ave. and Randall St. (Providence)
- Elmwood Avenue between Route 2 and I-95 (Providence)
- Bald Hill Road (RI-2) Warwick

Major Capital Projects

- East Ave Corridor (Warwick)
- Post Road/US -1 (Warwick)

Corridor Improvements Program

- RI-2 Bald Hill and Quaker Lane (Warwick)

Congestion Management Plan (2020)

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Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan (2020)

Along with the TMP, the Statewide Bicycle Mobility Plan (BMP) has been incorporated into Moving Forward RI 2040, the LRTP. Several BMP goals directly relate to public transit including: integrating the bicycle and transit networks, improving bicycle connectivity to transit facilities, considering shared bus-bike lanes, making improvements to the bicycle network around transit facilities, improving bus access for bicyclists, and improving bike parking near transit facilities. These enhancements will be considered part of Metro Connector Study concepts and align with Complete Streets policies below. The map in Figure 2-3 identifies corridors as candidates for the proposed recommendations, connecting with existing and fully funded facilities to create a statewide network, and indicating treatments that have not yet been funded.

Additionally, there are currently several planned and proposed bike and pedestrian enhancements within the Metro Connector Study area. These include:

- Extension and enhancement of the Woonasquatucket Greenway bike trail into downtown Providence.
- A proposed infill connection on the Blackstone Valley Bike Trail between Central Falls and Providence
- A proposed Mineral Springs Greenway that would intersect with the northern HCT corridor

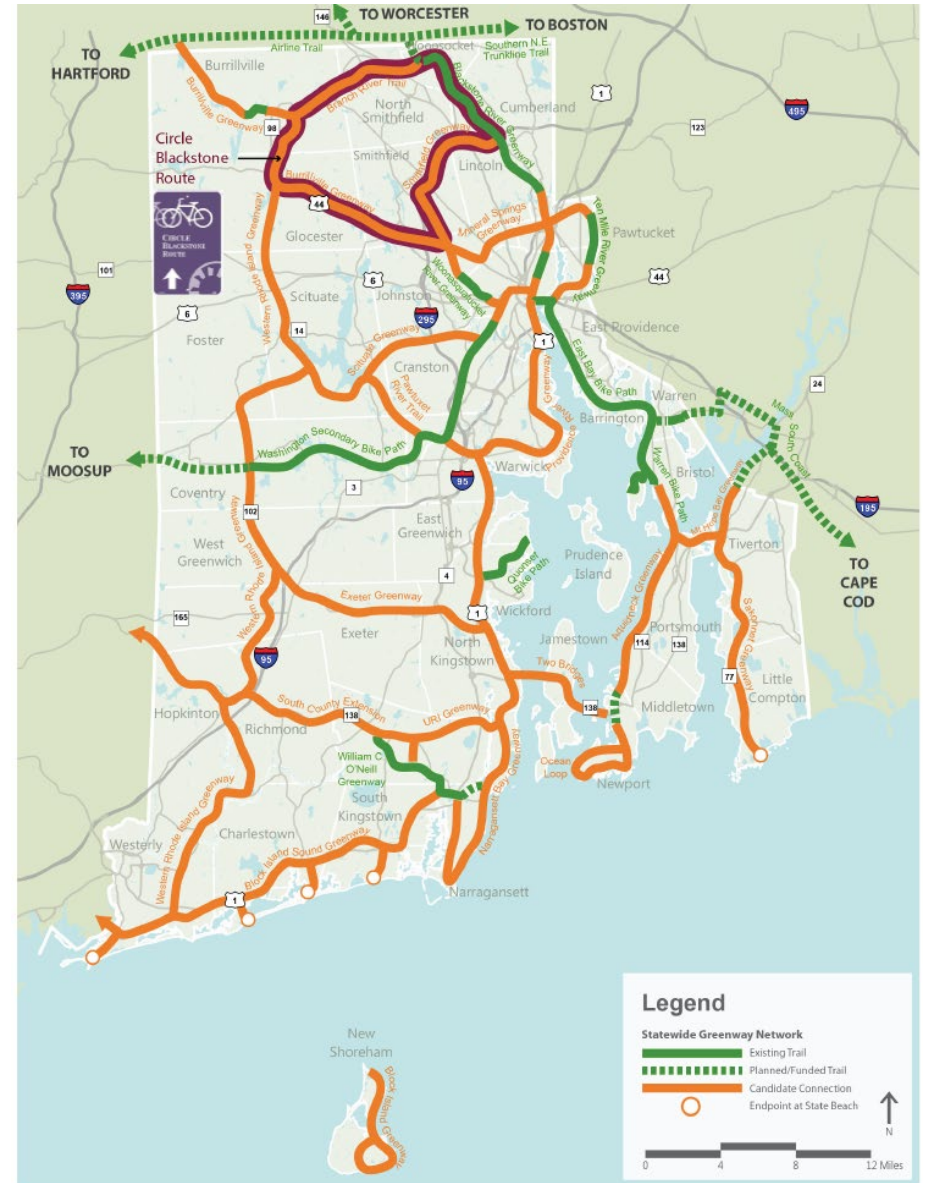


Figure 2-3 Proposed Statewide Greenway Network

Climate and Sustainability Plans

RI Act on Climate (2021) and 2022 Climate Update

The 2021 Act on Climate (RIGL §42-6.2) set mandatory targets for statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. These mandates are legally enforceable.

Table 2-4 RI Act on Climate Goals and Metro Connector Study

RI Act on Climate Goals	Relevance to Metro Connector Study
Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the following amounts below 1990 levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 45% reduction by 2030 ▪ 80% reduction by 2040 ▪ Net-zero emissions by 2050 	HCT is projected to increase transit ridership and encourage mode shift, thereby reducing overall VMT and GHG emissions and helping the State to achieve net zero by 2050.

The Act also established the Environmental Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4) which is tasked with identifying priority actions to achieve net zero and preparing annual updates on the State’s overall progress. **EC4’s most recent 2022 Climate Update identified transportation as the state’s largest GHG source responsible for 39.7% of statewide GHG emissions with two priority actions that the Metro Connector Study will directly help support.**

Table 2-5 Climate Update Priority Actions and Metro Connector Study

2022 Climate Update Priority Actions	Relevance to Metro Connector Study
Implement Transit Forward RI 2040 (TMP)	This action is estimated to grow transit ridership by 87,000 daily passenger trips and significantly reduce GHG emissions. The EC4 specifically points to the implementation of priority corridors recommended in the TMP, including the HCT corridors under study. The EC4 includes these emission reductions in their modeling for annual updates to achieve net zero.
Develop Complete Streets State Plan	Complete Streets enable safe use and support mobility for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. Designing roadways with all users in mind will make the transportation network safer and more efficient. The Metro Connector Study will advance complete street strategies as part of corridor concepts.

Clean Transportation and Mobility Innovation Report (2021)

This plan offered a mobility vision for Rhode Island and assessed strategies and new technologies that would lead to a more equitable and environmentally responsible transportation system. The plan calls for improvements and programs that aim to create a more efficient transportation network for Rhode Islanders, goals that specifically align with the Metro Connector Study.

On-board rider surveys from RIPTA indicate that low-income households rely heavily on public transportation, indicating that transit investments to attract new riders would decrease emissions as well as enhance mobility for low-income Rhode Island residents. Additionally, the growing concentration of the low-income population, projected to be 60% in greater Providence, reinforces the need for improved public transportation as traffic congestion and parking constraints increase.

The plan recommends expanding and investing in transportation assets to improve accessibility, including implementation of Transit Forward RI and creating a forward-looking transit structure for HCT and other transportation technologies.

Providence Climate Justice Plan (2019)

The City of Providence also has set a goal to become carbon neutral by 2050, and its Climate Justice Plan focuses on transitioning away from fossil fuel usage, particularly for “front line communities” or the low-income communities of color that are situated close to transportation facilities and industrial areas. These communities are shown on the Environmental Justice Screening Map (Figure 2-4).

The plan prioritizes modification of traffic patterns, transit improvements, and mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicles. **The Metro Connector Study aims to introduce improved transit serving several of the front-line communities mapped by the City, particularly in South Providence.** These improvements will help meet City goals to encourage mode shift and reduce emissions. The City has previously made progress towards these goals through a new zoning ordinance in 2014 that removed parking minimums in Downtown and in three TOD overlay zones, all served by the Metro Connector study corridors.

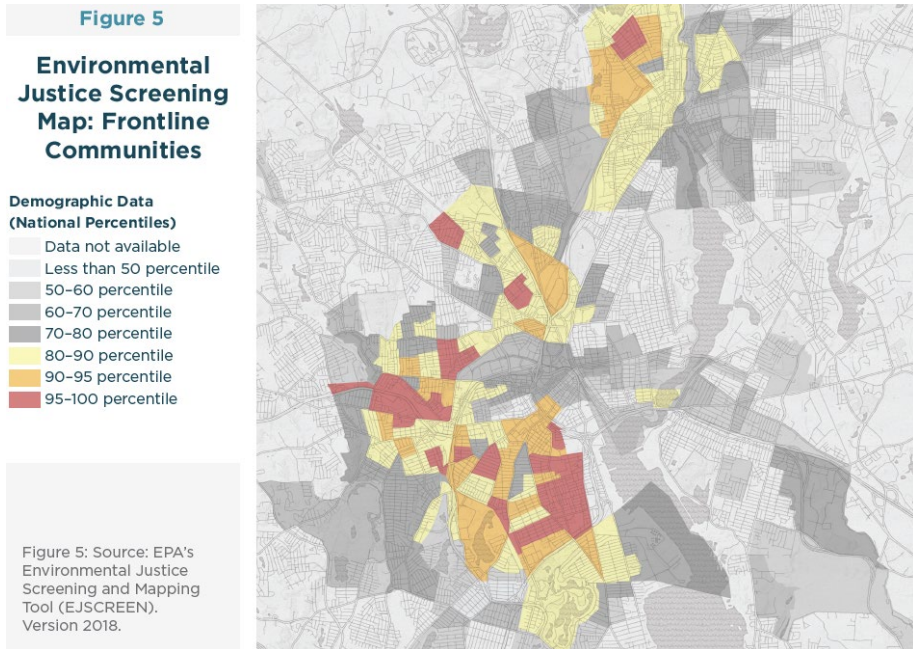


Figure 2-4 Environmental Justice Screening Map

2021-2024 Rhode Island Asthma Strategic Plan (2021)

This plan aims to prepare Rhode Island for the health effects of climate change and specifically focus on high asthma burden areas to mitigate these effects, in part through transportation. The plan is particularly focused on the air quality effects of transportation, and one of the objectives of the plan is to improve transportation infrastructure and reduce traffic congestion in and around low-income and communities of color. Public transit and particularly high-capacity transit is an effective strategy for reducing automobile usage, making this plan relevant to this effort.

One strategy proposed in the plan includes working with towns to pass, fund, and implement complete streets, which aligns with this effort because complete streets highlight modes other than driving, including public transit. The plan also proposed to improve public transportation, both the service and infrastructure, which directly aligns with the high-capacity transit effort.

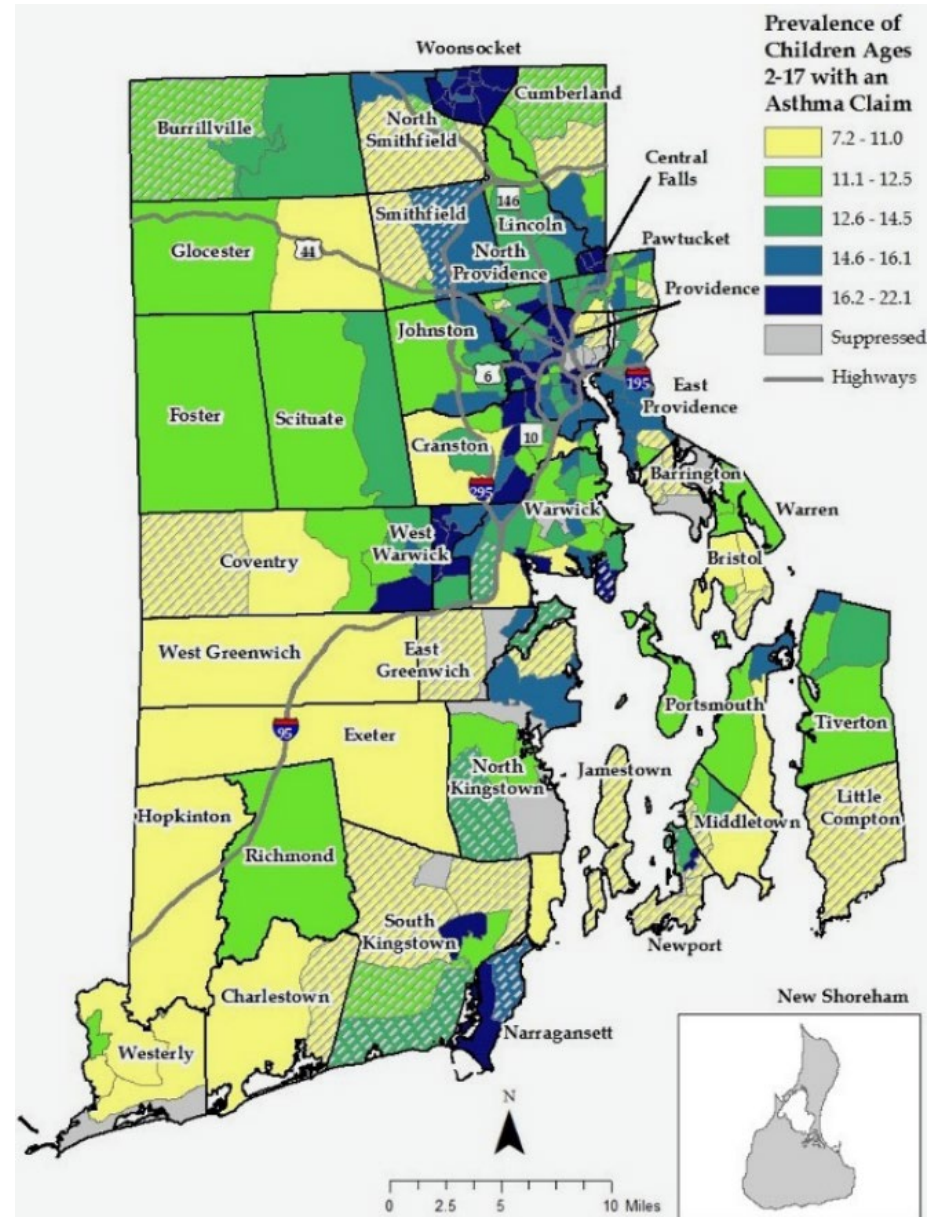


Figure 2-5 Asthma Hotspot Prevalence in Rhode Island

Safety and Complete Streets Plans

RI Complete Streets Policy and Master Plan (2015)

The RI General Assembly introduced a statewide Complete Streets design policy in 2012 (RIGL § 24-16-2).

This policy requires that when the State constructs or modifies roadways, the relevant department must “consider complete street design features that facilitate safe travel by all users that expands upon currently accepted state and federal design requirements to accommodate all users, including current and projected users, particularly pedestrians, bicyclists and individuals of all ages and mobility capabilities.”

In response to this policy, RIDOT completed a RI Complete Streets Master Plan in 2015. The RI Division of Statewide Planning is now working on a new Complete Streets Plan expected to be complete in 2025. The DSP indicates that this new plan will provide complete streets design and implementation guidelines for both the State and local municipalities. Policy guidance will be adopted into future planning for HCT corridors.

Walk Bike PCF (2020)

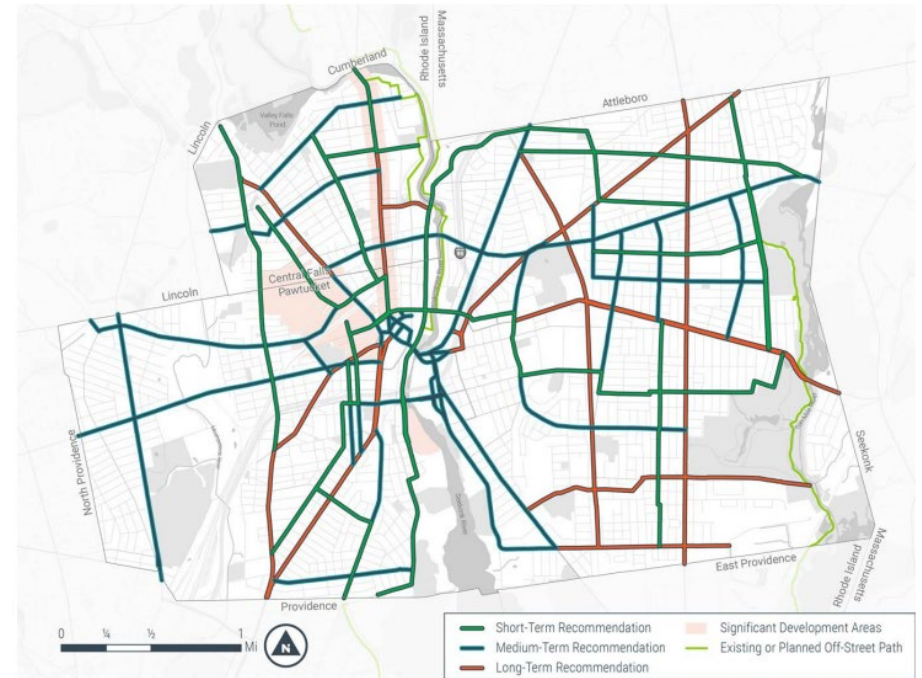


Figure 2-6 Walk Bike PCF Recommendations

This plan aims to create a multimodal network for Pawtucket and Central Falls, making it safer to walk and bike and improving access to public transportation, which would directly benefit the HCT effort. The plan noted that most bus routes operating in Pawtucket and Central Falls are low-frequency, and ridership is concentrated along the two high-frequency routes. There are also quality-of-life impacts for commuters who don't drive, including higher commute times and earning an average of \$10,000 less per year for riders of public transit.

The plan recommends multiple improvements to the walking and biking network, shown in Figure 2-6. These improvements would make it more comfortable and safer to walk in Pawtucket and Central Falls and will make it easier for residents to access high-capacity transit. **The plan recommends specific improvements for walking and biking to Broad Street, Exchange Street, and Main Street, including measures like restricting on-street parking to create bus/bike lanes, tightening intersection geometry, and eliminating slip lanes.** Some of the short-term recommendations have been implemented, including infrastructure to strengthen the Blackstone River Bikeway in Pawtucket.

Providence Great Streets Master Plan (2020)

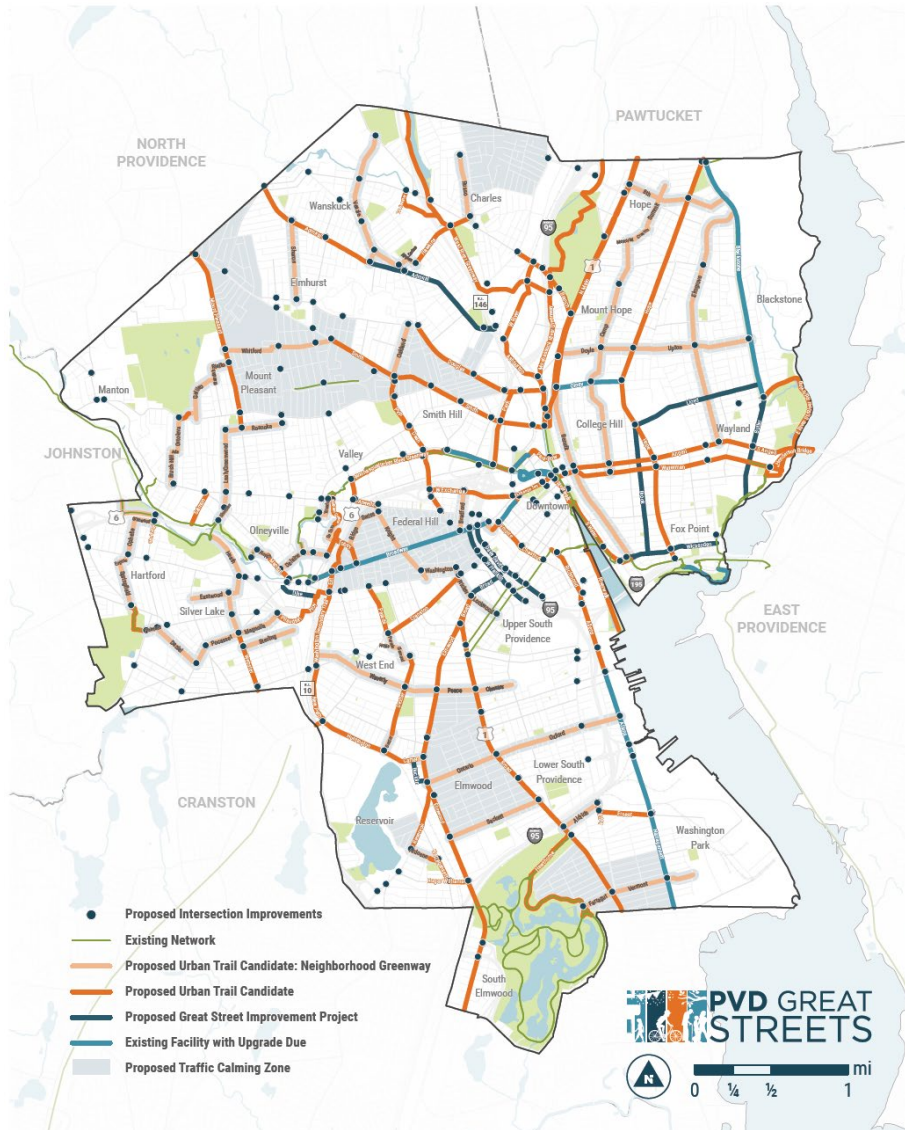


Figure 2-7 Proposed Citywide Urban Trail Network

The Great Streets Initiative aims to improve safety and livability on Providence's streets, including through improvements to make transit safer and more efficient, and is outlined in Figure 2-7. The plan includes the following priority strategies:

- A new network of urban trails connecting with RIPTA-identified transit priority corridors on Broad, Dorrance, Dyer, Eddy, Elmwood, Exchange, Washington, and Weybosset Streets, as well as the North Main Street corridor.
- Traffic calming measures for North Main Street (see North Main Street Study below).

The suggested facilities in the Great Streets Plan shown in Figure 2-7 indicate candidates to improve connectivity in the multimodal network and are primarily recommendations, rather than improvements that have been fully funded. The City is planning to update this plan within the next year.

Providence subsequently adopted a Vision Zero Policy in 2024 aspiring to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries among all road users. **Increased public transit ridership and enhanced mobility infrastructure were identified as key strategies for achieving this vision.** Providence has also received a \$27.2 million grant through Safe Streets for All to begin implementing Vision Zero strategies.

North Main Street Corridor Revitalization Study (2022)

This study resulted in a RIDOT Roadway Safety Audit (RSA), and safety improvements have been identified. RIDOT conducted the RSA in response to discussion from the North Main Street Task Force in Spring 2024. VHB is currently reviewing the RSA and it likely will not be finished before the end of Summer 2024.

Providence's North Main Street Corridor Revitalization Study, produced at the behest of former Councilwoman LaFortune, offers recommendations to improve the safety and character of this major arterial that connects Downtown Providence with Pawtucket. Although the R-Line currently runs along North Main Street, the study called for improved transit use to help mitigate climate change effects and meet other goals. The study also found that local growth along the corridor has outpaced housing supply and called for increased density and new housing.

The North Main Street study proposes improved transit service along North Main Street, increasing frequency and redesigning transit stations along the corridor to be more inviting and using complete streets strategies that prioritize people walking, biking, and taking transit. Several concepts developed by the City,



Figure 2-8 Proposed Street Designs

demonstrated in Figure 2-8, show HCT running in dedicated transit lanes. To align with City goals, the Metro Connector Study will develop similar concepts for municipal and public review.

Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plans (Under Development)

As part of Transit Forward RI implementation, RIPTA is currently spearheading an effort to improve roadway safety through a grant awarded under USDOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. The program aims to make regional and local roads safer for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders. Transit riders are active street users - relying on accessible sidewalks, visible crosswalks, and clearly marked boarding areas.

RIPTA is working with 31 municipalities (including Central Falls, Pawtucket and Cranston) to develop individual SS4A action plans. Once complete, these municipalities will be able to apply for funding through the SS4A program and advance strategies to support public transit, including transit stop access and safety along the Metro Connector corridors. Providence's Great Streets Master Plan serves as their SS4A plan and they have received over \$27.2 million in implementation funding.

Land Use & Housing Policies and Plans

Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program (2023)

The RI General Assembly created a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Pilot Program (RIGL § 45-24-77) to increase the availability of housing near transit, alleviate traffic congestion, and further State climate goals. Through the program, **municipalities will be empowered to establish zoning overlay districts or other land use tools within ¼ mile from mobility hubs and 1/8 mile from frequent transit service (defined by Transit Forward RI as 15 minutes or less). HCT concepts to be developed through the Metro Connector Study will meet the frequent service criteria and provide significant new opportunities to increase housing density and supply in a sustainable manner, which in turn will help to grow long-term ridership along the study corridors.**

To date, the General Assembly has committed \$4M to incentivize municipal rezoning and the creation of affordable housing units in TOD districts. The RI Department of Housing is tasked with developing selection criteria for the program, including density and percentage of affordable units in the project.

Housing Facts RI (2023)

The Housing Fact Book is an annual publication presented by HousingWorks RI, a research and policy organization focused on housing affordability indicators and social well-being. The annual report outlines housing affordability data for Rhode Island's 39 municipalities.

More than one-third RI households and one-half of renters are cost burdened by their housing. A chronic lack of supply of both owner and rental homes continues to hamper Rhode Islanders' housing options. Only two study area communities (Providence and Central Falls) meet the state's goal for 10 percent affordable housing stock in every community.

The report notes that transit offers valuable perspectives on regionalism because corridors are not defined by municipal boundaries, but by routes along which Rhode Islanders live and work. HousingWorks RI conducted additional analysis¹ to further evaluate opportunities for new housing presented by the state's TOD Pilot Program along the Metro Connector transit corridors. Takeaways included:

- About 47% of the parcels currently zoned for single-family residential along the corridor are in Warwick and Cranston. Most parcels zoned for multi-family use are found in Providence, followed by Pawtucket and Central Falls.
- Much of the zoning along the corridors doesn't allow for densities to support sustainable ridership, and more multi-family zoning is needed to create vibrant, walkable and economically thriving neighborhoods that support transit.
- Today, zoning and the uses allowed change dramatically when the corridor crosses municipal boundaries. From a regional perspective, more collaboration between communities is needed to create more cohesive corridors with transit supportive zoning.

Pawtucket & Central Falls Station District Vision Plan (2016)

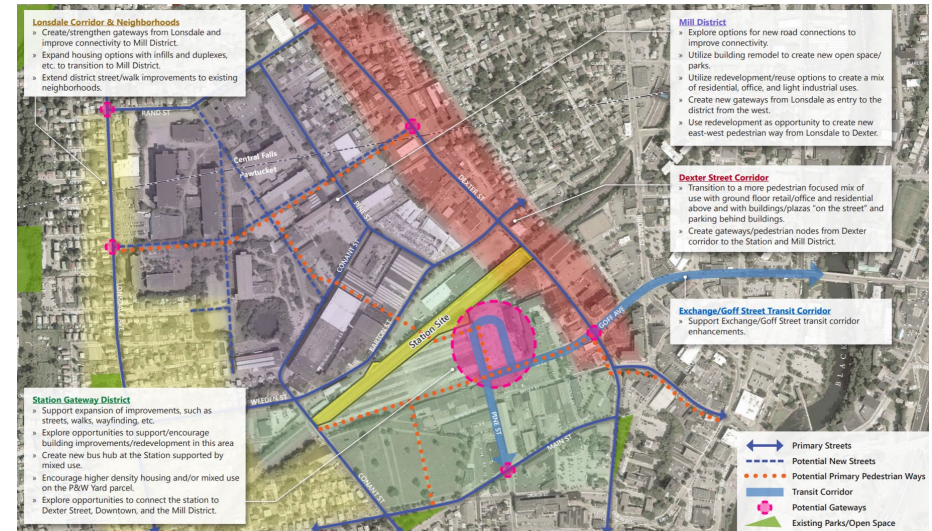


Figure 2-9 Station Vision Plan

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_CrOwZ3pBM&t=853s

This plan established a vision for a new TOD overlay zone encompassing parts of both Pawtucket and Central Falls around a new MBTA commuter rail station and relocated Pawtucket bus hub. The two cities subsequently established a Joint Pawtucket/Central Falls zoning overlay district in 2019 called the Conant Thread District. The new intermodal center opened in 2023.

Both cities increased development densities and eliminated parking minimums in the District to encourage high-density, mixed-use development. The vision plan also outlines changes to create new streets and reinforce connections between the train station, local destinations, and surrounding neighborhoods.

The HCT corridors under study are envisioned to serve this key transportation hub, and the increased density and allowed mix of uses in the TOD district will strengthen ridership potential. Likewise, the frequent, fast and reliable transit service envisioned for the corridors will enhance opportunities for further sustainable development and strengthen the local community. The Pawtucket bus hub is the second busiest in the State and provides connecting RIPTA service to riders traveling throughout Pawtucket, Central Falls, and the greater Blackstone Valley area.

Providence Comprehensive Plan Update (Expected 2024)

The City of Providence is currently working to update their Comprehensive Plan, with a final document expected by the end of 2024. As shown in Figure 2-11, drafts of the document released in spring and summer 2024 **prioritize both Downtown and the North Main Street corridor as Priority Mixed Use Growth Areas, designated for the highest levels of transit service and mobility options. The City has also designated Elmwood Avenue, Reservoir Avenue, and Eddy Street as Growth Corridors**, or transit corridors with mixed-use and higher-density residential infill development. The plan also includes multiple strategies for encouraging transit use and improving mobility, including adding bike parking at transit stations and improving walking and biking routes to transit.

A draft plan was approved by the City Planning Commission in June 2024, but changes are still possible before City Council adoption, expected in late 2024.

Following final plan adoption, the City's Department of Planning and Development has indicated an intent to amend local zoning to focus higher-density, mixed-use development in these areas. Additional strategies that will be highly supportive of HCT along the corridors under study include:

- Continue investments in multi-modal transportation safety, efficiency, and electrification in line with the Great Streets Plan, RI TMP, and RI LRTP, to encourage mode shifts toward public transportation, and other modes.
- Promote TOD and place new residential developments at locations that increase potential ridership on the transit system and support Providence as the region's employment and cultural center.
- Advocate for sufficient funding to maintain existing transit service levels, increase frequency, and extend service spans in line with the recommendations of TMP.
- Improve infrastructure to prioritize buses and bus passengers especially on the highest frequency corridors, including the creation of dedicated right-of-way for buses.
- Prioritize curb uses, including the preference for bus stops, where needed, over on-street parking. Also, ensure sufficient sidewalk and ADA infrastructure exists at bus stops.
- Support RIPTA in its process to establish a new, world-class Providence transit center that meets the needs of RIPTA operations, transit users and Providence's planning and economic development goals.

**DRAFT PROPOSAL
Growth Strategy Map**

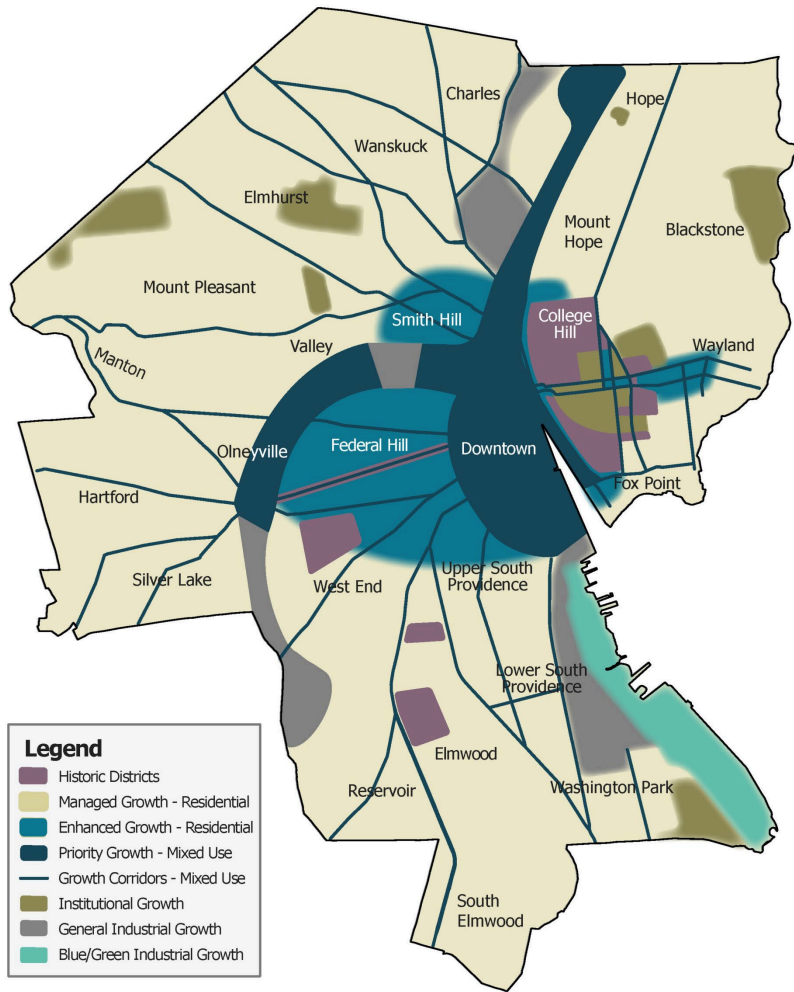


Figure 2-10 Draft Proposal: Growth Strategy Map

Warwick Master Plan (2013)



Figure 2-11 Warwick Comprehensive Plan Strategic Priorities

One of the goals of Warwick's master plan is to work with RIPTA to enhance service in Warwick to improve connectivity and reduce car trips, as well as supporting roadway projects along east/west routes and major commercial corridors to reduce traffic congestion.

There is significant congestion on Warwick's roadways, primarily due to high population densities, poor access management, and a lack of sufficient east-west routes. Main Avenue and a section of Post Road were operating at an LOS E or F during the morning or evening peak hours when the plan was completed. In addition, the plan noted that 13 of the 50 most dangerous intersections in Rhode Island are within Warwick, including Main Avenue and Post Road, according to a 2011 report. Public transit in Warwick is also mainly oriented towards Providence rather than offering intra-city connectivity.

The plan recommended prioritizing complete streets projects for corridors such as Route 2, Route 5, and Jefferson Boulevard to emphasize key linkages between the bicycle and transit networks. Some of these corridors are likely well-suited for HCT. The plan also proposes to evaluate the feasibility of enhanced or new linkages across Warwick's rail corridor and support initiatives to increase transit ridership.

Warwick Station Development District (“City Centre”) Master Plan (2012)

This master plan outlined a vision for public infrastructure improvements and higher density development in the area surrounding TF Green Airport and the then-proposed commuter rail station. It led to the establishment of a defined TOD district, now known as City Centre Warwick. Goals include capitalizing on intermodal transportation resources to foster mixed-use growth and creating a sustainable, livable community by improving access to transportation, housing, and new jobs.

The City Centre district is envisioned to capture economic benefits for Warwick with mixed-use development, retail and restaurants, and other development capitalizing on its location as a regional transit hub. Figure 2-10 shows the rezoned district encompassing both the Airport and MBTA rail station.

The HCT corridors under study are envisioned to serve this district, offering improved connections to both the Airport and MBTA station. The increased density and allowed mix of uses in the TOD district will strengthen ridership potential. Likewise, the frequent, fast and reliable transit service envisioned for the corridors will enhance opportunities for further sustainable development and strengthen the local community.

City of Pawtucket Comprehensive Plan (2017)

Pawtucket's Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need for more efficient public transit in the city and addresses the potential for the new commuter rail station for the city and opportunities for transit-oriented development in surrounding areas. The plan proposed a Transit-Oriented District around the now-opened Pawtucket-Central Falls Transit Center, which would also increase potential ridership for the HCT effort. Another action item in the plan is to focus on advancing the new Pawtucket-Central Falls commuter rail station that is now open. The plan also noted the need to develop a transit-emphasis corridor on Exchange Street related to the relocation of the RIPTA bus hub, which moved to the new transit center.

Central Falls 2050 (Under Development)

The City of Central Falls is currently developing an update to its Comprehensive Plan to present a framework for the city's future. The city's planning board is undertaking the update, and the final recommendations are expected in 2024 or 2025.

City of Cranston Comprehensive Plan (2010)

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Cranston focuses on strategies to reduce traffic by promoting alternate modes other than driving and implementing measures to increase safety, including traffic calming in residential neighborhoods. The plan addressed multiple public transit issues, including whether parking should be adjusted to increase the potential for transit use in high-density areas and alternatives for commuter rail in Cranston.

The plan does not provide specific recommendations for locations but offers overarching strategies for RIDOT, Public Works, and the Planning Department. One of the strategies in the plan is promoting alternate modes of transportation, including public transit, specifically fixed-route bus services, to reduce dependency on vehicles. The plan noted that alternative modes are underutilized even though Cranston has a significant transit-dependent population, and the plan recommends making information on public transportation available. Another strategy advises a feasibility study for transit-oriented development around a potential Cranston rail station and preserving railroad rights-of-way for future transportation corridors.

Town of Cumberland Comprehensive Plan and Valley Falls and Lonsdale Economic Revitalization & Social Equity Plan (2017)

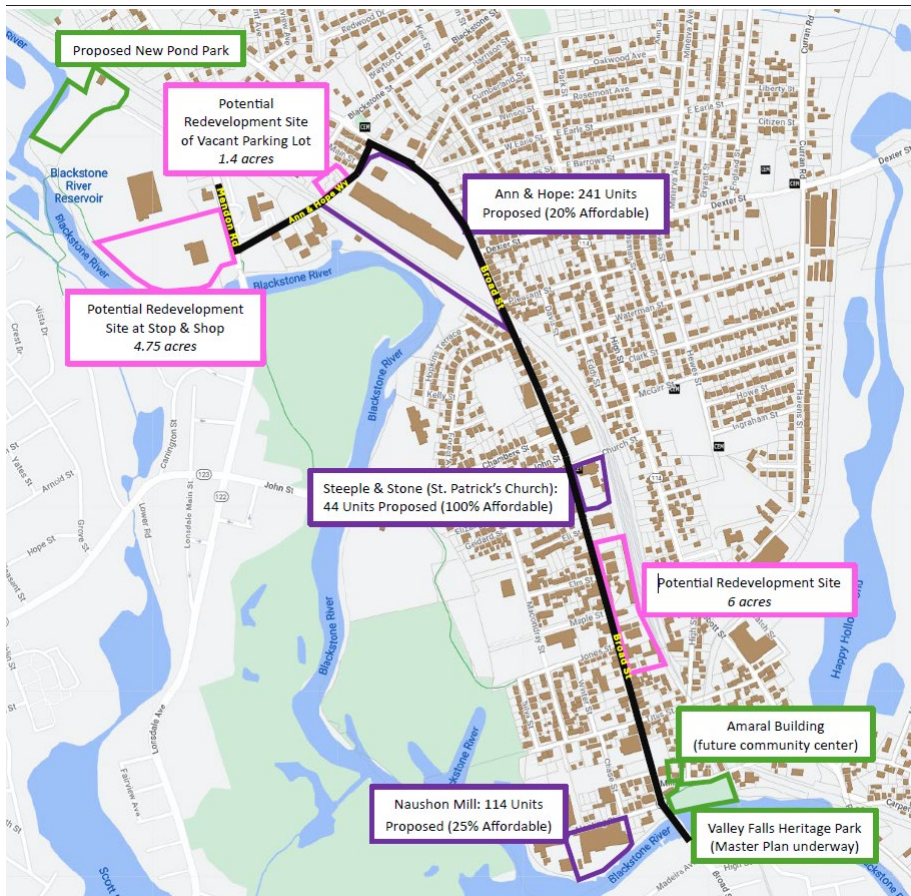


Figure 2-12 Proposed Development in Valley Falls/Lonsdale along Major Corridor

The Valley Falls area in the Town of Cumberland forms the northern border of the study area, and this plan addresses multiple land use and transportation-related issues in the surrounding area.

The plan makes several findings related to transportation in the Valley Falls area. It notes that Broad Street needs traffic calming and safety enhancements and is supportive of RIPTA bus service and the potential for future commuter rail service passing through Cumberland, north of Valley Falls. The area's proximity to the

Blackstone River Bike Path was also noted as enhancing the area's potential for revitalization.

A separate plan, the Valley Falls and Lonsdale Economic Revitalization & Social Equity Plan (2023), specifically addresses revitalization along the Broad Street and Mendon Avenue corridors. These neighborhoods border Central Falls to the north and would be impacted by high-capacity transit. The plan outlines concepts for introducing higher density residential development along the Broad Street corridor in areas likely to be served by high-capacity transit. The plan recommends amending the Development Regulations to provide better access to existing and future developments, which could help provide connections to high-capacity transit. The plan also recommends enhancing pedestrian safety, including the installation of crosswalks and sidewalks, throughout the Town, including on Broad Street, Mendon Road, and Highland Avenue. This improvement would create a safer environment for transit users to access high-capacity transit services.

Ocean State Accelerates (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) (2023)

This plan is the State's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which sets a statewide economic strategy to provide access to US Economic Development Agency (US EDA) funding programs. It identifies state priorities for economic development, supports related state investments in affordable housing and transportation, and prioritizes embedding sustainability into transportation initiatives. **The plan recommends expanding public transit networks, focusing on access to employment opportunities and training, and prioritizing access to transit hubs, rapid bus corridors, and frequent transit routes. The plan also recommends implementing the Transit Forward RI 2040 plan for first-mile/last-mile connections to improve access to services throughout the state.**

The plan also notes that a significant portion of the state south of Providence, including Warwick, has limited transit accessibility and low walk scores. Cumberland has the highest walk score in the state, which is compatible with high-capacity transit.

RI 2030: Charting a Course for the Future of the Ocean State (2022)

This policy statement sets forth the Governor’s priorities through 2030. Among other priorities, this plan calls for the State to **“implement the vision outlined in the state Long Range Transportation Plan, including the Rhode Island Transit Master Plan 2040, to better connect Rhode Islanders with each other.”** The plan also prioritizes actions to progress towards the emission mandates listed in the 2021 Act on Climate. Both plans prioritize increasing and strengthening public transit to attract more riders and reduce emissions. The Governor’s priorities also include increasing housing production, which would be supportive of HCT.

Summary and Opportunities

The Metro Connector Study is tasked with considering the introduction of high-capacity transit into two corridors spanning from the Central Falls/Cumberland border to CCRI-Warwick, and from downtown Providence to RI TF Green International Airport. This review of state and local plans and policies has found that the introduction of faster, more frequent and reliable transit in these corridors will align with numerous State and local plans and policies.

- The existing market for HCT in Rhode Island is well-documented in the Transit Forward RI 2040 plan. This plan used a data-driven approach to understand existing and future population, job densities, travel flows, and the market for transit. Based on this data, the two HCT corridors being studied were identified as being able to support all day frequent high-capacity services.
- Moving Forward RI 2040, the Statewide LRTP, establishes performance measures to increase transit ridership, introduce more dedicated bus lanes, improve RIPTA's reliability, and increase the number of residents and jobs served by frequent transit in order to encourage mode shift and reduce VMT. These strategies will be considered for implementation as part of the Metro Connector Study.
- The State's Congestion Management Plan found the Providence Metro region to be the most congested in the state, with up to 17% of highways congested during the weekday peak. It supports a network of prioritized multimodal corridors to mitigate bottlenecks, increase mode choice, and improve intermodal connectivity.
- The 2021 RI Act on Climate established a mandate to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050. The EC4 tasked with identifying strategies to achieve this mandate identifies the transportation sector as the largest source of GHG emissions in the State and recommends implementation of the TMP as funding allows.
- The Clean Transportation and Mobility Innovation Report recognizes that transit investments decrease emissions while enhancing mobility for low-income residents. The plan recommends implementation of Transit Forward RI as part of a set of strategies to create a more equitable and environmentally responsible transportation system. Providence's Climate Justice Plan also looks to encourage mode shift and reduce emissions, particularly in disadvantaged frontline neighborhoods. The Metro Connector study corridors pass directly through several of these communities.
- Other statewide and municipal documents point to the Transit Forward RI 2040 plan as a strategy to achieve complementary goals, including improved transportation network connectivity, stronger communities, increased economic development, reduced GHG emissions, and safer streets that accommodate all users. Implementation of fast, frequent, more reliable transportation along the two high priority corridors will support all of these goals.
- The State adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2012, with an updated Complete Streets Plan now underway. The City of Providence has a Great Streets Master Plan and RIPTA is now working with other municipalities in the Metro Connector Study area to prepare Safe Streets for All Action Plans. The presence of widely adopted and consistent multimodal transportation network policies will support a complete streets design approach for concepts in both HCT corridors, with opportunities to offer affordable mobility options, safer streets and improved quality of life.
- North Main Street has been identified for significant capital investment by several safety plans and the state TIP. North Main Street's density, community support, and width make it well suited for HCT.
- Advancement of HCT in the Metro Connector study corridors presents a significant opportunity to meet local and State land use goals and to catalyze new housing to help solve the state's housing supply gap. Parcels along the full length of both corridors will likely be eligible for increased density and funding incentives under the State's TOD Pilot Program. The higher densities and mixed-uses allowed in the following areas will also bolster ridership along the corridors:
 - Five established municipal TOD zones (Conant Thread in Pawtucket/Central Falls, City Centre in Warwick and three TOD overlay zones in Providence).
 - Priority growth areas/corridors identified in Providence's draft comprehensive plan update: downtown, North Main Street, Elmwood Avenue, Reservoir Avenue and Eddy Street.
 - A proposed high-density district in the Valley Falls area of Cumberland.
 - However, as noted by an evaluation of municipal zoning and housing development potential in the Metro Connector corridors, much of the zoning along the corridors doesn't allow for densities to support

sustainable ridership, and more multi-family and mixed-use zoning is needed to create the vibrant, walkable and economically thriving neighborhoods that support transit. Furthermore, from a regional perspective, more collaboration between communities is needed to create more cohesive corridors with transit-supportive zoning.